

Beyond romance: Rethinking time and narrative in jazz histories

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Abstract

This article analyses narrative, time and causality in current general histories of jazz, in the context of the ontological turn in the field. It proposes that jazz studies should go beyond romance as the dominant historical emplotment, pluralize their narratives, and establish a new historiographical relationship to the past in order to produce a truly global, decentred and decolonized history of the genre. The article is divided in three sections, which successively explore historical narratives, representations of time and causality in the past, and some theoretical problems in global and local histories.

Keywords: jazz historiography; jazz history; narrative; time; romance

Introduction

In the last few decades, the ontology of music genres has changed to assert the relevance of their geneses, networks and mediations (Drott 2013; Piekut 2014; Brackett 2016; Born and Barry 2018). This must, of course, lead to an emphasis on the importance of global transfers and non-human agents in jazz history (Berish 2019; Schuiling 2019). However, this article proposes that a real ontological shift in jazz studies should also overturn our narratives and our concepts of time and causality. As Michel de Certeau pointed out, historians have naturalized time as an unconsidered question (De Certeau 1999: 48). That has made them largely unaware of their 'regimes of historicity'—the way relations between the past, the present and the future are configured—which conditions the types of history that are possible (Hartog 2015). Since temporality can be a form of domination, I believe that

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thinking about the temporal normativity of our historical frames, combined with the current turn to global history and diaspora, is crucial to decentring and decolonizing jazz studies.

Time and causality have not been central issues in New Jazz Studies. As an epistemological response to traditional histories, and as their cultural and Foucauldian models, they have been particularly interested in *difference*, not in *sameness*. Maybe that is why New Jazz Studies are not especially attentive to the *longue durée* or, on the rare occasions when they are, the product is disappointing (Prouty 2010: 39–41). Now, thirty years after the publication of the most influential article in New Jazz Studies, Scott DeVeaux's 'Constructing the Jazz Tradition', it is time to think about the historicity of our current narratives. The starting point of this article is that some important limitations on writing jazz history today derive from the naturalization of romance as an unquestioned and hegemonic employment. I am referring to what Hayden White called a 'metahistory', the way historians, consciously or not, narratively organize their accounts of the past as romance, tragedy, comedy and satire (White 1973). However, the basic question in this article is broader: how should jazz scholars relate to the past?

Jazz, historical narratives and modernity

In his famous article 'Constructing the Jazz Tradition', often considered the key text for the consolidation of New Jazz Studies (O'Meally, Edwards and Griffin 2004; Tucker 2005; Whyton 2012; Pfeleiderer 2019), Scott DeVeaux described an 'official jazz story' that fits an organic narrative of styles:

On these pages, for all its chaotic diversity of style and expression and for all the complexity of its social origins, jazz is presented as a coherent whole, and its history as a skilfully contrived and easily comprehended narrative. After an obligatory nod to African origins and ragtime antecedents, the music is shown to move through a succession of styles or periods, each with a conveniently distinctive label and time period: New Orleans jazz up through the 1920s, swing in the 1930s, bebop in the 1940s, cool jazz and hard bop in the 1950s, free jazz and fusion in the 1960s. Details of emphasis vary. But from textbook to textbook, there is substantive agreement on the defining features of each style, the pantheon of great innovators, and the canon of recorded masterpieces (DeVeaux 1991: 525).

This coherent and progressive historical narrative had been constructed in the 1950s, from different ideological positions, by authors such as Sidney Finkelstein, Barry Ulanov, André Hodeir, Joachim Ernst Berendt

and Marshall Stearns (Gennari 2006: 137–54; Hardie 2013). DeVeaux criticized it as a history of jazz written backwards, which recapitulates ‘the evolutionary progress of Western art’ and ‘can be described satisfactorily only in aesthetic terms’ (DeVeaux 1991: 526, 542). Despite DeVeaux’s article remaining the most quoted text in recent jazz studies, the evolutionary and stylistic narrative about this genre has shown an extraordinary resilience. In 2010, Ken Prouty still pointed out:

The pages of Prefaces, Introductions, and Author’s Notes of jazz history textbooks are filled with ruminations about what is wrong with the canon, and how they are going to go about doing things differently, but the contents of these books are more inclined to demonstrate how much things remain the same. This, I suggest, is the most disappointing aspect of the critiques of canon in contemporary historiographic discourses. It is one thing to point out what is missing or what is wrong with a particular historical narrative. Suggesting an alternative, however, is more difficult (Prouty 2010: 43).

If Prouty focused on canon, my concerns here are narrative, time and causality. In fact, I think that one of the reasons for this canon’s durability is the fossilization of its employment. The key to such persistence lies in the validity of this story as a social and political project of modernity, not unrelated to a certain form of nationalism. DeVeaux already provided a plausible explanation in his 1991 article:

The accepted historical narrative for jazz... is a pedigree, showing contemporary jazz to be not a fad or a mere popular music, subject to the whims of fashion, but an autonomous art of some substance, the culmination of a long process of maturation that has in its own way recapitulated the evolutionary progress of Western art. The added twist is that this new American classical music openly acknowledges its debt not to Europe, but to Africa. There is a sense of triumphant reversal as the music of a formerly enslaved people is designated a ‘rare and valuable national American treasure’ by the Congress and beamed overseas as a weapon of the Cold War (DeVeaux 1991: 526).

Applying Hayden White’s metahistorical classification, DeVeaux explained this dominant mode of storytelling as a romance, a heroic account of ‘the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness’ (1991: 533). DeVeaux’s article ended up assuming that romance was the narrative archetype that he himself assumed in his classes:

My courses in jazz history are designed to inculcate a feeling of pride in a racially mixed university for an African-American musical tradition that manages, against all odds, to triumph over obstacles of racism

and indifference. For this, the narrative of jazz history as Romance is a powerful tool, and I have invested a good deal into making it a reality in my students' minds through all the eloquence and emotion I can muster (DeVeaux 1991: 552).

Indeed, romance is the triumphant plot of modernity (because it represents overcoming the past) and of humanism (because it embodies the triumph of the ideal over the material, mind over body, culture over nature). That is why, in Western culture, history emplotted as romance 'is usually described as a journey, a struggle, with eventual victory over adversity for the hero' (Munslow 1997: 158).

This narrative archetype is shared by many of the most indispensable recent jazz histories, such as Lewis Porter's *Jazz: From Its Origins to the Present* (1992), Burton Peretti's *Jazz in American Culture* (1998), Ted Gioia's *The History of Jazz* (1999), Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns's *Jazz: A History of America's Music* (2000), and Scott DeVeaux and Gary Giddins's *Jazz* (2009). These academic and non-academic books are based on the metaphor of the past of jazz as a fascinating, adventurous journey, a 'long, winding odyssey' (Gioia 1999, back cover). They present 'the travails and triumphs of musical innovators struggling for work, respect, and cultural acceptance' (DeVeaux and Giddins 2009, back cover). 'The true history of jazz', writes Ken Burns, 'is the story of a million nights when, against all odds, men and women of all colours and often astonishing gifts came together and made great art, in each instance recalling centuries of human suffering, cruelty, negotiation, search, and finally joy' (Burns 2000: ix). Sometimes, this construction of jazz as a hero is obvious even in book titles, for example in Franck Bergerot and Arnaud Merlin's *L'épopée du jazz* (1991) and in Noël Balen's *L'odyssée du jazz* (2016, sixth edition).

Therefore, although many biographies of jazz musicians are emplotted as tragedies, romance is the shared narrative of most histories of the genre. As Wolfram Knauer has recently pointed out, 'jazz historiography often talks about successful or tragic heroes' (Knauer 2018a: 7). Nevertheless, to advocate a history of jazz as 'a music which is being created not only by great masters, but certainly by many individualists' is not really 'an alternative to a story of heroes' (Knauer 2018a: 8), but a history of alternative heroes, which is very different. The canon is enlarged, but romance remains intact. As DeVeaux concluded, this kind of history is pervaded by pride, which always seems to be a good emotion with positive consequences. But, as we know, pride can be a dangerous mediation; most importantly, it is not necessary for writing history, since it can simplify the past and regard jazz

as an object of national identification (Dunkel 2014b). If in the romance narrative, as Peretti points out, jazz ‘tells a peculiarly American story’ (Peretti 1998, back cover), we need other archetypes to relate a more global and decentred history of the genre.

In fact, the problem with romance is not exclusively related to the concept of nation: this narrative also seems to mirror the masculine Western Romanticism that Nichole Rustin-Paschal (1999), David Ake (2002), Eric Porter (2002) and Tony Whyton (2010), among others, perceive in jazz musicians. R. W. Connell has pointed out that the hero figure is central to the Western cultural imagery of the masculine (2005: 213–15). In this sense, as the preeminent narrative of masculinity, romance complicates the emergence of non-androcentric historical accounts and contributes to maintain jazz as a male domain. To be included in jazz histories, women instrumentalists must be exceptional and therefore unlike other women. In this way, they ‘can enter the discourse without changing it’ (Tucker 2002: 384). Besides, within the logic of conventional heroism and its driving quest for power and domination, activities coded as feminine care-work, such as teaching or mothering, have a secondary role in historical narratives of jazz (Blais-Tremblay 2019). Exposing romance as a gendered narrative raises the question of which experiences of the past can be particularly overshadowed by the emplotment and causality of conventional jazz histories, focused on continuous production.

In the narrative of jazz as a hero, musicians’ struggles are graphically described ‘*against* the backdrop of American history, commerce, and politics’ (DeVeaux and Giddins 2009, back cover; my italics). That ‘*against*’ is no coincidence: in romance, jazz resists its context, which consists of hindrances to its endogenous progress rather than musical mediations. That is why recent general histories of jazz still tend to preserve it as an autonomous art, not far from well-known stylistic approaches such as Frank Tirro’s (1993, second edition) or Mark Gridley’s (2011, eleventh edition). From this point of view, jazz echoes the triumphant progress of American liberalism: its victory implied the end of its history, a complete development within American borders (Fukuyama 1992). In this way, the triumph of jazz fossilizes the end of its history in the 1960s. However, insofar as it fundamentally serves modernity and national ideological projects, the dominance of romance must be questioned in times of postcolonialism, feminism, post-humanism and global history. David Scott has suggested that:

Anticolonial stories about past, present, and future have typically been emplotted in a distinctive narrative form, one with a distinctive

story-potential: that of romance. They have tended to be narratives of overcoming, often narratives of vindication; they have tended to enact a distinctive rhythm and pacing, a distinctive direction, and to tell stories of salvation and redemption. They have largely depended upon a certain (utopian) horizon toward which the emancipation history is imagined to be moving. I do not take this conceptual framework to be a mistake. However, in the wake of the global historico-political and cognitive shifts that have taken place in the past decade or two, I have a doubt about the continued critical salience of this narrative form and its underlying mythos (Scott 2004: 8).

Maybe, Scott continues, it is time for tragedy: history 'as a dramatic confrontation between contingency and freedom, between human will and its conditioning limits'. The value of this emplotment 'is not merely that it raises a profound challenge to the hubris of the revolutionary (and modernist) longing for total revolution, but that it does so in a way that reopens a path to formulating a criticism of the present' (Scott 2004: 135). Jazz history as tragedy would be an enriching alternative to romance, for sure. However, it would not free us from conceiving of jazz and its figures as heroes. It is no coincidence that Hegel considered only comedy and tragedy as appropriate modes of historical emplotment (White 1973: 93). Just like romance, tragedy focuses on struggle: the difference between the two is victory or failure.

The coherence of romance can obliterate history's complexities and contradictions. As Sherrie Tucker has posed in a subtle musical metaphor, as historians, too, we need to listen to and enjoy dissonances without necessarily seeking resolutions (Tucker 2005: 44–45). I have found in satire a suitable plot to narrate the multiple and apparently contradictory pasts of jazz during the Spanish Civil War and under Francoism (Iglesias 2017), and Scott DeVeaux himself wondered about the possibility of narrating bebop not only as struggle, but also as error or paradox (DeVeaux 2018). These are examples of an ironic narrative that 'achieves some of its principal effects by refusing to provide the kinds of formal coherencies one is conditioned to expect from reading romance, comedy, and tragedy' (White 1973: 28). Satire is anti-essentialist, self-critical and realistic; it frustrates conventional expectations, is aware of language's problems, favours representations of experience in a non-figurative way, and not only proposes multiple causality, but also stresses the importance of contingency (White 1973: 37–38). What romance and comedy present as constant change, tragedy and satire see as chaos and 'eternal return of the same in the different' (White 1973:

11). In other words, a crucial difference between them is the absence or presence of the past.

Romance and the presence of the past

Another questionable effect of romance is the naturalization of a linear, evolutionary past. The history of jazz as a progressive narrative was built against purist historical approaches such as Frederick Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith's *Jazzmen* (1939), Hugues Panassié's *The Real Jazz* (1942), and Rudi Blesh's *Shining Trumpets* (1946). In those ground-breaking books, music was framed in a parallel time, before it was affected by modernity and technology. New Orleans and Chicago were the lost paradises of authentic jazz as American folklore. On the contrary, romance focuses on continuous change and renders disruption incompatible with continuity. Jazz historians assume that the newest or the most visible were also the mainstream; if novelty is assimilated into the real mainstream, this implies its decline or its silence, which is a form of progress. This intrinsic development appears even in books thought to offer something 'that cannot be obtained through reading a conventional narrative', such as Lewis Porter's complementary reader, whose illustrative title is *Jazz: A Century of Change* and tries 'to show that jazz history is a lively, evolving process' (1997: vii). Consequently, histories of jazz as romance do not avoid the implicit teleology of stylistic approaches.

Romance produces a particular 'regime of historicity' that configures the past as a closed time (Hartog 2015). As art historians in general, jazz scholars have emphasized ruptures and discontinuities, a pattern favoured by the cultural frame of modernity. In this scheme, every event, every recording, every musician's struggle is a necessary step towards the future. This is based on the argument that historical reality is a linear process and, therefore, history should study change and difference, not continuity and sameness. This idea has been reinforced by the main theoretical perspectives that have affected the recent historiography of jazz: social history, rooted in the Hegelian thinking of dialectical change; cultural history, conceived as the exploration of the past's otherness; and symbolic interactionism, applied to the study of music through influential concepts such as Christopher Small's *musicking* (Small 1998). The conceptualization of music as a linear process has been extraordinarily helpful to avoid its reification in works, scores or recordings. Nevertheless, it also has historiographical

consequences in relation to time and causality: if the past is completely different and separated from the present, it is gone.

Besides, jazz histories continue to be narratives of production, not of reception. They place creators only in the period in which they lived. Thus, the works produced do not survive their composers, who, once deceased, can no longer be mediators. However, the musical past is obviously full of posthumous and contingent agencies that condition its history (Stanyek and Piekut 2010). As Alyn Shipton reminds us, 'the awareness of the "presence" of the tradition of the past has shaped the playing of musicians throughout jazz' (Shipton 2001: 874). In this sense, integrating studies such as Gabriel Solis's on Thelonious Monk (2007) or Tony Whyton's on John Coltrane (2013) in the *longue durée* would require rethinking our narratives. Mario Dunkel has stressed how recent jazz, such as that composed by Darcy James Argue, reveals that 'musical history is a matter of historical contingencies', defying 'the aesthetic determinism that, for a long time, had shaped the conceptualization of jazz history' (Dunkel 2018: 138).

The growing concern with the ontological status of the past, however, has pointed to less homogeneous and naturalized notions of time and process. Reinhart Koselleck offered a model of multiple temporalities in which different *Zeitschichten*, or layers of time, converge in the same moment (Koselleck 2000). Besides, philosophers of history such as Eelco Runia, Frank Ankersmit, Chris Lorenz or Herman Paul have written extensively about the problems of equating 'the past' and 'historical reality'. Whereas the latter no longer exists, past and present are intertwined. This entails changes in the historiographical presence of the past. As Michael Bentley claimed years ago, 'by the millennium the historical community had had enough of absence, and rightly so' (Bentley 2006: 350). The past, Bruno Latour argues, 'is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted' (Latour 1993: 75). It is, of course, 'irrevocable', as Berber Bevernage has written, but it has not entirely disappeared. This persistence is essential to understand how it continues to condition the present, and it is also what gives memory its extraordinary power of resistance both to oblivion and to the histories that conceive the past as a closed entity (Bevernage 2012). As the experts on trauma well know, the past refuses to go away. Therein lies the importance of fieldwork and memory for music and jazz studies: they allow us to continually question our narratives, as well as the very limits on which we have built the past, the present and the future (Bohlman 2008; Gebhardt 2010, 2018). For the same reasons, the past is continuously transformed by the present.

This ontological turn, based on Henri Bergson, Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger and Gilles Deleuze, is transforming the historians' concepts of time from absolute, linear and progressivist to relative, discontinuous and polychronic (Lorenz 2014: 46). History is more cumulative than linear: each new phase 'added itself to the other ones, coexisting and interacting with them' (De Landa 1997: 16). In this sense, jazz genres and styles, as well as their discourses, sounds, objects and spaces, coexist and interrelate continuously. Robert Kronenburg has pointed out the inescapable conflict that an evolutionary account of architecture arouses when writing a history of popular music performance spaces (2019: 9–10), and Wolfram Knauer has analysed how the experience of iconic jazz venues reveals the continuous intersection of history and memory, of past, present and future (Knauer 2018b). Historical narratives do not necessarily have to be sequential. In fact, it is possible that a radically historical account requires not only an anti-essentialist emplotment, but also an anti-chronological one. Deleuze and Guattari already warned us that 'evolutionary schemas may be forced to abandon the old model of the tree and descent' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 10).

As Andrew Wright Hurley has claimed, jazz history in the original edition of Joachim Ernst Berendt's *Das Jazzbuch* (1953) was 'quite spidery—even rhizomatic' (Hurley 2018: 97). Jeremy Barham and David García have proposed the rhizomatic model of *A Thousand Plateaus* as a means of exploring the relationships between jazz and its alleged 'others' without hierarchies or linear genealogies. Barham's proposal of comparing the creative processes of jazz and classical music could shed new light on the links between jazz and musical modernism, beyond the boundaries fossilized by the analysis of musical genres as self-referential entities (Barham 2009). García, for his part, proposes that 'there is a danger in understanding music and dance *in* its social and historical context' and presents his book as a study of individuals who 'were all along forging futures out of the temporal and spatial conditions of their respective placings in modernity' (García 2017: 270, original emphasis; 268). The challenge that remains, I think, is how to produce a rhizomatic narrative that reveals time as a social construct, but keep it as real, while not necessarily ignoring social mediations of affect and sound.

This non-dualist perspective and radical historicity is also crucial to integrate us, as historians, into the objects we research. As Paul Ricoeur reproached Hayden White, historiographical emplotment is not merely a matter of choice or taste (Ricoeur 1984: 168). A historical narrative is neither

a reflection of the past nor a mere projection on it (Ankersmit 1994: 36). Jazz's possible pasts arise in or are limited by our interaction with sources and traces. They have been as mediated by institutions, monuments, musical performances and all kinds of objects, from instruments to scores or recordings, as by the categories and the symbolic capital of those who wrote their history. That is also why abstract questions such as 'Is jazz popular music?', as well as our responses to them, are ethnocentric and pointless. When? Where? For whom? And, last but not least, who is asking? As Simon Frith has remarked, 'the question here is not whether jazz is popular music; the question is why is popularity such a jazz problem' (Frith 2007: 22). We need general histories of jazz as continuous becoming that include critics, historians and writers rather than placing them in a parallel world. And this could be urgent in transnational histories of jazz, since 'it is impossible to write a global history from nowhere' (Subrahmanyam 2014: 26).

Global and local histories

Perhaps the most striking theoretical trend in recent historical studies of jazz has been the shift towards transnationality, an understandable tendency in an increasingly globalized society and academic field. In this sense, the spatial shift intensifies a trend that postcolonial and diaspora studies began decades ago. Indeed, as Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman point out, one of the basic concerns of popular music studies since the late 1990s has been to apply a global perspective that complements and revisits historical narratives centred on the United Kingdom and the United States (Bennett and Waksman 2015: 5). The interest in the transnational has also generated numerous global studies of jazz (Atkins 2003; Zenni 2012; Ruesga Bono 2013; Gebhardt and Whyton 2015; Johnson 2016 and 2020; McGee 2019). This global perspective has even given rise to a prestigious editorial series at Routledge, 'Transnational Studies in Jazz'.

Many of these transnational histories of jazz are, in fact, multi-national projects, which are not the same thing. The latter aim to expand the canon of the cases studied, giving voice to academically underrepresented countries, or to show the plurality of national scenes. However, this inclusive history has not generally been accompanied by changes in conventional explanatory criteria or models (Bohlman and Plastino 2016: 9). A change in geographic perspective does not necessarily subvert dominant narratives about jazz (Schenker 2019: 231). A ground-breaking book such as Taylor Atkins's *Jazz Planet*, for example, gathers 'the innovative contributions

of non-Americans to the jazz idiom' in a section entitled 'Local Heroes' (Atkins 2003: xxii). The problem is twofold. On the one hand, adjectives can automatically relegate countries to the periphery: in this case, 'local' is set aside for non-Americans; by contrast, US musicians are the only 'global' ones. On the other hand, the label 'heroes' reinforces and globalizes romance as 'the' historical narrative for jazz. The same can be claimed about the attempts to locate Europe as a new 'centre' for jazz since the 1980s (Nicholson 2005), which works as a form of *translatio imperii*. The relevance of neotraditionalist aesthetics and practices should not give the illusory impression of decadence because, certainly, 'jazz is not dying in the United States' (Ake 2019: 84).

On the contrary, in its diverse variants (comparative history, world history, transnational history, connected history, *histoire croisée* or entangled history), global history does not seek to elaborate a universal account or to identify new creative axes, but rather to show that the past has been transformed through reciprocal relationships and influences, in which there is no centre that can be isolated as the sole determining actor (Conrad 2016: 4). Such an agenda has questioned exceptionalist readings of jazz as something 'created' in the United States and then progressively 'received' in other countries (Johnson 2002, 2019 and 2020; Hendler 2010; Tackley and Whyton 2010, 2012; Gebhardt 2012; Zenni 2012). As Bruce Johnson has argued, 'the problem with the established narrative is not that it is US canon-centered, but that it continues to declare itself to be the only narrative' (Johnson 2019: 19). From this perspective, global history has embarked on a crusade against the nation-state as a closed entity for analysis. New Jazz Studies have rightly underlined the limitations of national contexts 'as analytical constructs' and 'the importance of refiguring jazz within much broader cultural and historical paradigms' (Gebhardt 2012: 186). However, nations are more than just 'analytical constructs', and they are certainly no more constructed than 'Europe', 'the World' or 'the Black Atlantic'. One of the dangers of the global-local dichotomy is forgetting the relevance of the nation-states—geopolitical realities that shape cultural and material processes and networks—as inescapable agents of contemporary history. The price of deconstructing the nation cannot be to conceal it. On the other hand, if the nation-state is questioned as an object of study, but its ontologies and narratives are underpinned, we are simply globalizing its chronotypes. And temporality can be a form of domination, because time is an effective resource to include all world events within a single frame with a unique notion of change.

In this sense, another risk is that the emphasis on coincidences may obliterate plurality and exceptions, or, in Dipesh Chakrabarty's words, 'domesticate the heterogeneity' (Chakrabarty 2000: 42). If we understand jazz diaspora as a linear adaptation to different places, we are just replacing one evolutionary model (Darwinian) with another (Lamarckian). Extrapolating romance to a transnational history of jazz can entail three fundamental biases: first, by equating diverse material environments and epistemes; second, by suppressing both multiple causality and hetero-temporality; and finally, by fossilizing the hegemony of the same centres. For example, the fact that the first approaches to a transnational history of jazz use only bibliography in English constitutes a paradox, if not another proof of empire. The most complete and informed histories of jazz in France (Tournès 1999), Germany (Knauer 2019), Italy (Mazzoletti 2004, 2010), Spain (García Martínez 1996), Portugal (Martins 2006) and all Latin American countries (except Cuba) are published exclusively in French, German, Italian, Spanish or Portuguese. If the transnational history of jazz is to be written solely from bibliography in English, it will leave out a good part of the most important studies in the genre and, more seriously, it will include only countries that already have approaches in that language. Paradoxically, therefore, the great current risk of diasporic history is both to silence the subordinate and to obviate the asymmetries produced by centuries of colonialism.

At least one more danger is worth mentioning: turning transnational jazz histories into mere bibliographical summaries or theoretical exercises, removing them from their primary sources or naturalizing their mediations and their local logics of documentary preservation (Subrahmanyam 2014). Take, for example, the main publications about jazz in American public diplomacy (Carr 2004; Von Eschen 2004; Crist 2009; Davenport 2009; Fosler-Lussier 2015; Saito 2020). They are based almost exclusively on the American archives, which, in this respect, work essentially as a colonial archive: they register the decisions made in the United States and the reports sent by the American diplomatic personnel in the different countries. In this sense, the analysis of diplomacy privileges intentions and scarcely problematizes the nature of its repositories. However, archives are not only places, but also processes in which power relationships and regimes of truth have been codified. Before creating a narrative from the archive, the historian should unravel its conventions, criteria, and categories of classification, as well as the logics of its silences and incongruities (Stoler 2009). Some scholars have recently shown the multiple and contradictory

perceptions of the US State Department-sponsored tours in Poland, the Soviet Union, Germany and Spain, revealing the frequent discrepancies between senders and receivers as well as the active role of local mediations and contingencies in jazz as public diplomacy (Hatschek 2010; Ritter 2013, 2018; Dunkel 2014a; Iglesias 2017). Examining the relationship between the dissemination of jazz and the imperialism and propaganda of the United States relativizes the idea of jazz as 'a gift to the world' (Moreno 2016; Schenker 2019). However, listening carefully to the empire should include recognizing the ambivalences of hybridization, shifting the focus from its intentions to its effects. Analysis of the syncretisms of jazz with Cuban, Brazilian, Spanish and Indian music exclusively based on the musicians' intentions tell only one part of their history. In the process, hybridization has created stereotypes and exoticisms that have mediated the aural connotations and the subsequent reception of these countries' music.

Conclusion

All history, Hayden White warned us, is philosophy of history. The real internationalization of jazz studies should entail the dismantling of Western temporal frames to move towards a less organic, teleological, anthropocentric and androcentric history. A more complex and decolonized theory of temporality requires overcoming the historicist notion of time, whose narrative archetype is romance. The problem with romance is that it is a narrative of victory, and we should heed Walter Benjamin's warning: 'empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers' (1969: 256). We are questioning the nation and American exceptionalism with tropes that are their most solid support. What this article urges is not to avoid romance in jazz histories, but to question its naturalization. Romance is not worse or better than any other historiographical emplotment, but it limits our accounts of the past in times of global, feminist, neomaterialist and posthuman consciousness. Therefore, this is not a matter of *quality*, but of *possibilities*. We do not have to abandon the *longue durée*, but we need new forms of narrating it that 'divert our attention from stories about sovereign subjects knowingly making their histories' (Tomlinson 2007: 373).

Jazz's historical mediation, its capacity to affect and to be affected, depends on our narratives as much as on our sources. That also implies that the historian moves from a distant and passive observer to an active participant more conscious of the performative nature of our regime of historicity. The modern concept of time and a unidirectional causality are not

the exclusive historiographical options for jazz scholars. Since, as Koselleck (2000) pointed out, the transformation from ‘histories’ to ‘history’ is at the very origin of modernity, maybe we need to undertake the reverse process, from ‘the history of jazz’ to ‘histories of jazz’. Their strength and accuracy will depend on our ability to make them local, national and global, addressing interdependence and heterogeneity, specifying networks and mediations rather than parallels and influences. In our way, we may also allow jazz to be hero and villain, freedom and tyranny, subversion and hegemony, enriching its past, present and future.

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